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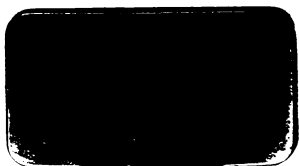
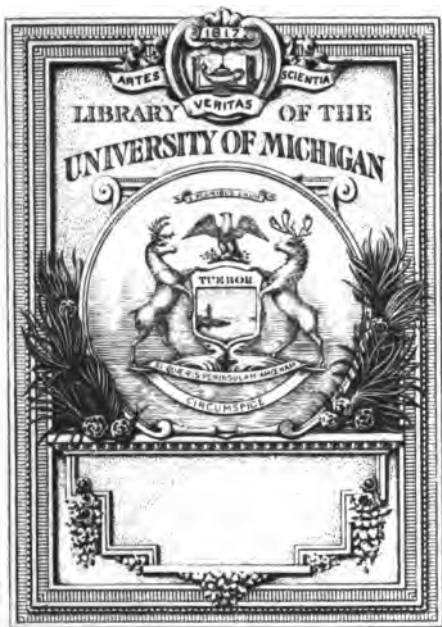
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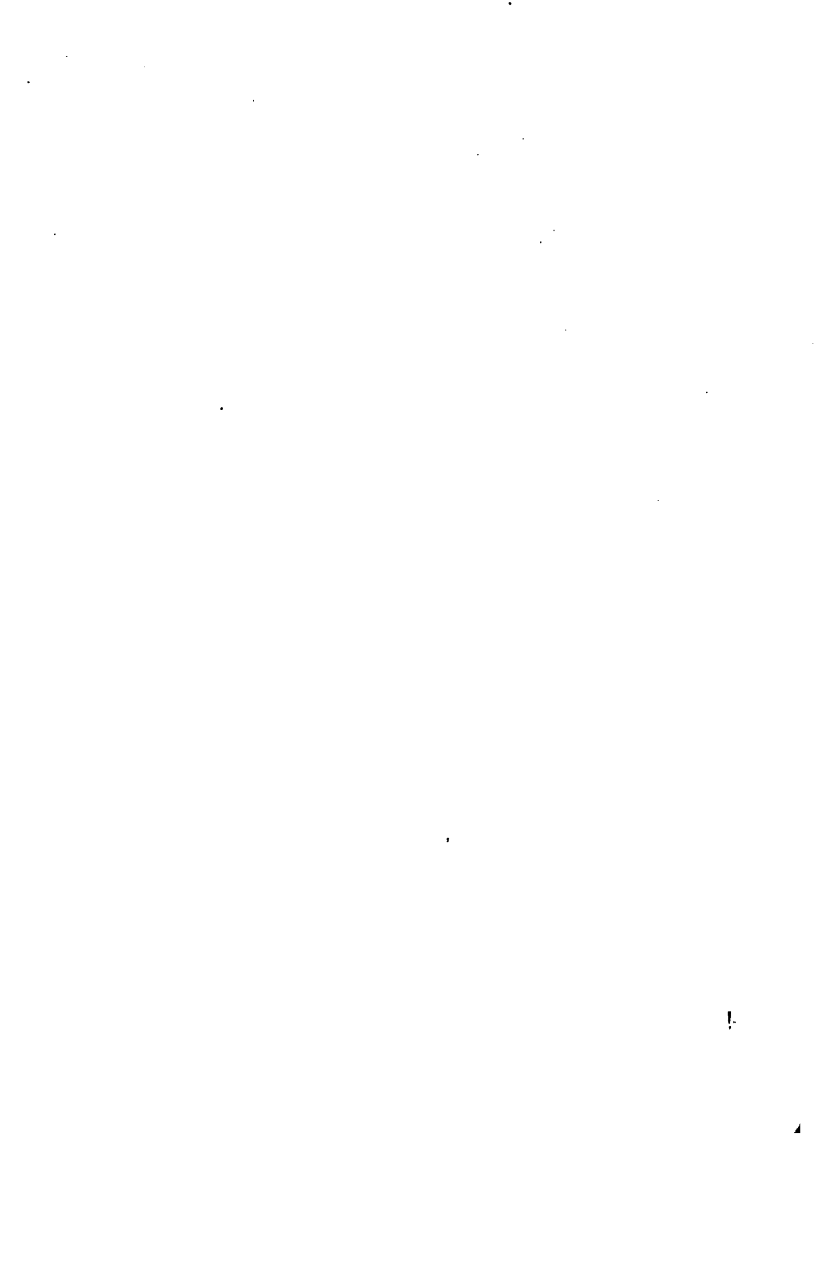
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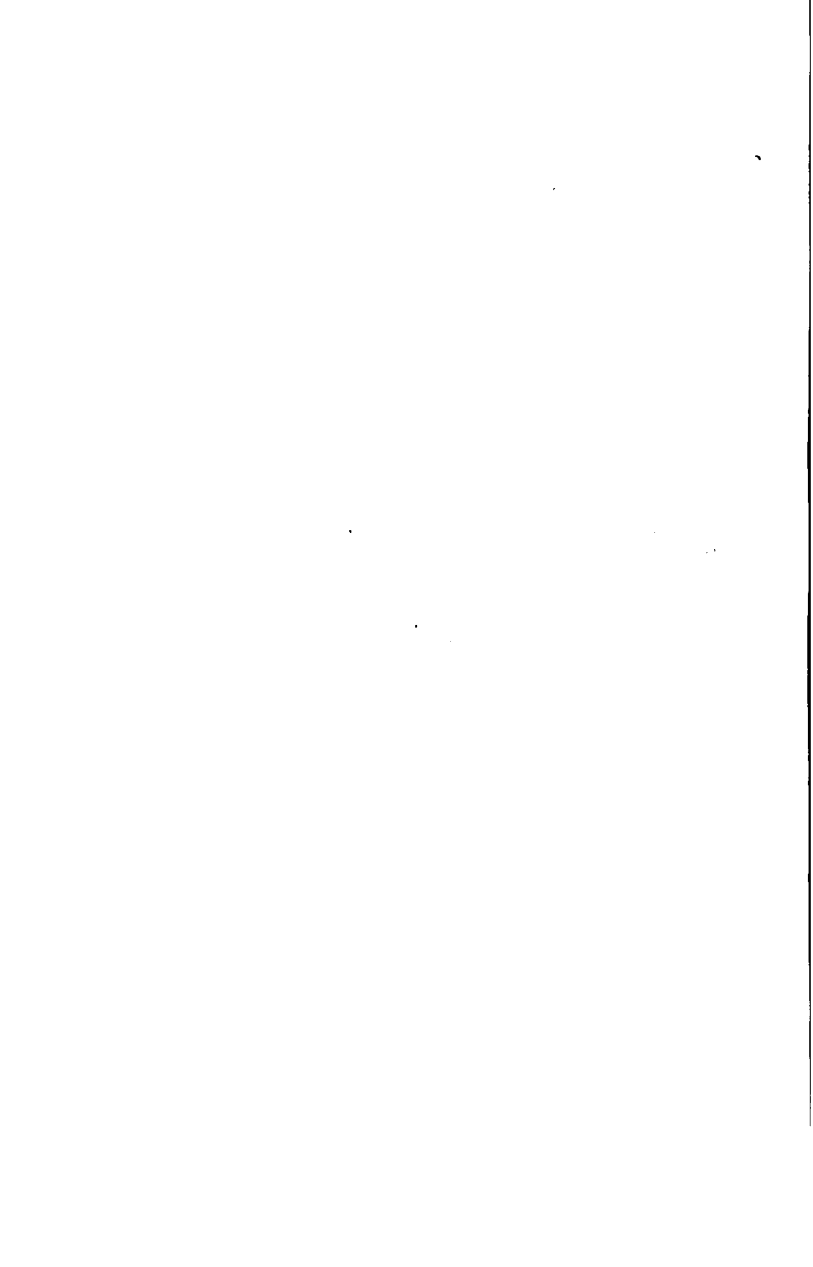
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A
BRIEF ACCOUNT
OF THE
MECHITARISTICAN SOCIETY

39149

FOUNDED
ON THE ISLAND OF St. LAZARO



VENICE

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ARMENIAN ACADEMY

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1835

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TO THE REV.

DOCTOR PASCHAL AUCHER

SECRETARY TO THE

MECHITARISTICAN SOCIETY

REV. AND RESPECTED SIR,

Perhaps in the course of their tour through Italy, there will have occurred to my Countrymen, no object of more peculiar interest, nor one more deserving their attention, than the Esta-

blishment on the little island of St. Lazaro. Finding there a Society of Armenians, preserving pure and distinct from the Europeans, their oriental habits and customs; the first impression they will receive, must be that of curiosity and interest, to know how this Society became established in the Lagoon: but when they are made acquainted with the object of that Society, I doubt no, but that those feelings must be succeeded by those of respect and esteem. In order to give them, in a brief survey, this information,

I have been induced to write the following pages, taken from your account of the Society, in the Armenian and Italian languages published at the Convent.

Permit me to offer them to your acceptance, as a small token of my gratitude for the advantages I have received from the Establishment, during my sojourn in Venice; but more particularly from your kind and assiduous attention. At the same time, I beg to assure you that the warmest wishes for the welfare of the Society,

and the attainment of its laudable and
glorious object, will never fail to be
entertained by

Your obliged and grateful Pupil
ALEXANDER GOODE

Venice June 1st. 1825.

A

BRIEF ACCOUNT

OF THE

MECHITARISTICAN SOCIETY

LIFE OF THE FOUNDER

MECHITAR, an Armenian Doctor, Founder of this Society, was born in Sebaste, a city of Armenia Minor, in the year 1676. He was in his youth entrusted to the care of an Armenian priest, by whom he was instructed in the first elements of knowledge; and under whom, he made progress, great-

er than could be expected from his age, and evinced a disposition for study and religious exercises, rather than for the amusements common to youth.

At the age of nine years, having expressed a particular inclination for the Ecclesiastical state, he received the four minor Orders: and at fifteen, he entered into a convent near to Sebaste, called the Convent of the Holy Cross, to assume the habit of a Monk.

The Bishop Ananias, Superior of that Convent observing in him peculiar talent and ability, gave him the habit, and ordained him Deacon in the year 1691. Here Mechitar, diligent in devotion and study, was employed in the repeated and attentive reading of the Sacred Volume, and of practical works, and thus acquired a store of intellectual light.

In this Convent he composed some sacred poems and Homilies, being fond of thus exercising his talent. But

discovering that he could not here make any advance in other sciences, he left it; and took for his companion an Armenian Doctor of Etchmiatzin, the Patriarchal seat of the Armenian nation, who promised to conduct him to that city as to the Seat of universal science.

Travelling with this Preceptor, he came to Erzerum, the capital of Armenia Major, and there for the first time saw an European Missionary: of whom he made many enquiries respecting the Europeans, and gained from him much information to his satisfaction and advantage.

Having arrived in Etchmiatzin, he did not find there that University of Science, which he so ardently desired; wherefore, taking leave of his Preceptor, he went to the Convent in the island of Sevan, thinking to remain there satisfied. But when he found that retirement to be merely the abode of

the most rigorous austerity, he determined to return to his country.

In the course of his journey he arrived at the Convent of Passen near to Erzerum, and in compliance with the request of the Superior remained there some time and gave instruction to the youth. He passed there nineteen months thus occupied, when he became acquainted with an Armenian gentleman lately returned from Europe, who gave him many accounts of the western countries. To these Mechitar listened with eager attention, and from that time sought an opportunity of visiting Europe.

He found in the house of this gentleman, the works of Clemens Galanus,¹ and took from them the notes more necessary to his purpose.

In the year 1693. being at Sebastie, he retired again into the Convent

¹ Clemens Galanus: *Conciliationis Ecclesiae Armenae cum Romana*. Romae 1690.

of the Holy Cross, and devoted himself to the more attentive perusal of the works of the Armenian Fathers : as also to those, of the Greek and Si-riac Fathers, translated into the Armenian tongue. So great was his love of study, that he did not neglect his reading even in his travels : no book ever escaped his hands, which he had not read entirely, and examined with the closest attention.

He composed also in this Con-vent some hymns which are now sung in some Churches of Armenia .

But being there afflicted with a distressing complaint in his eyes, so that he could not distinguish any external object, he was obliged to re-turn home, and to subject himself to medical care. During so severe a ma-lady, he was an example of the great-est patience. He caused to be read to him the sacred poems of S. Nierses

Claiensis, ¹ and committed them to memory, and often recited to his friends his own compositions.

On his recovery, he was on the point of commencing his journey towards Europe, urged by the great thirst for science. But at that time a certain Armenian Priest, a man whose habits were those of literary pursuit, came to Sebaste, who pressed him to accompany him to Jerusalem for the purpose of there applying themselves to study. Mechitar consented to accompany him as far as Aleppo, with the hope that on the journey he should be able to persuade him to join him to Rome.

As they were passing the river near to the city of Malatiah, the girth of the saddle of the horse which Mechitar rode, broke: the current car-

¹ St. Nierses a celebrated Patriarch of the Armenians in the 12 Century.

ried away the animal. Mechitar saved himself, but by the accident many of his writings were lost.

On their arrival at Aleppo, he had the good fortune to converse with some European Missionaries: among whom was a Jesuit, a man distinguished for his virtue, learning, and information in the oriental languages. To him he communicated his intention of going to Europe for the purpose of study. But the wise Jesuit, discovering in him great erudition acquired by his own labor, and a particular zeal to enlighten others, advised him for the great advantage of his own nation, not to abandon his country. Finding however his suggestions of no effect, he gave him some letters of recommendation, the purport of which was as follows: " This being a young man of the greatest zeal; at the same time, of integrity of conduct and singular piety; possessing extraordinary genius

and information of the religious works of the Armenian Fathers, I could not but approve the plans he had formed of visiting Rome ”.

He parted at length in 1695 from Aleppo with his companion, whom he had persuaded to undertake with him the journey to Rome, and arriving at Alexandria they embarked for Europe.

Scarcely had the vessel reached Cyprus, when Mechitar was attacked with a violent fever, so that he was obliged to separate from his companion, and to sojourn in a Convent of Armenian monks. Here in the more raging moments of the fever, being deprived of his reason, he was seen to throw himself into a fountain in the garden, to moderate his internal sufferings: while the only food which supported him, was a few olives mixed with barley-bread.

No sooner was he somewhat recovered by the kind assistance of a

friend, than he determined on returning to his paternal roof, hoping to recover there his former health.

He embarked therefore for that purpose for Seleucia: where having landed, he pursued his journey on foot, and begging his maintenance on the road, arrived at Aleppo. The European Missionaries in that city all advised him to abandon the idea of going to Europe, and to return prudently to his country. He went thence to Enteb and uniting himself to a Caravan, arrived in Sebaste; to the inexpressible joy of his family who believed him to have died long before in Cyprus.

After some months of anxious solicitude he regained his perfect health, and returned to the Convent of the Holy Cross.

In this retirement among other literary productions, he translated into verse the Proverbs of Solomon, with a view to render them familiar to

children. But one of the Monks, jealous of his fame, entered one day secretly into his chamber, and having taken all his writings, committed them to the flames. Mechitar no sooner discovered it than he heroically pardoned him.

The monks of the Convent, as well as those persons of Sebaste, who had taken greater notice of his conduct, being edified by his example of piety and virtue, did not cease to urge him to enter the Sacerdotal order, and in the year 1696. he complied.

From this moment he began to entertain a lively zeal to enlighten his nation, and to instruct them in morality and in religion: but not being able of himself, to forward so great a work, he endeavoured to stimulate others. Hence it came, that by his preaching and by his good example, in a short time he was followed by two disciples in Sebaste. But their parents,

being indignant against him, he left them at liberty. Not long afterwards, Mechitar heard of the fame of the learned Doctor Catchadur, an Armenian pupil of the Society De Propagandâ Fide, and wished to go to Constantinople to visit him, and to procure his assistance in the praiseworthy undertaking of enlightening his nation.

This happened in the year 1697. To this great man he declared his intention of founding a literary Academy, and urged him to accept the office of Superior. But Catchadur refused, alleging among other difficulties, the want of a supply sufficient for the purpose. Nevertheless, Mechitar was not discouraged, and no sooner was he followed by one disciple of that city, than uniting him with one of the former two of Sebaste, who had overcome the scruples of his Father, he determined to present himself with them to another famous Armenian

Doctor, who resided in the province of Uchdick, on the confines of Georgia; from whom he hoped to obtain assistance in establishing the desired Society. But he was reduced to so low a state of poverty, that he had not the means to provide himself for the journey, he therefore applied to some devout individuals for alms for that purpose: and by their assistance not only prepared for his journey, but purchased a Bible, and some other books and with his two disciples embarked for Trapezond. On this voyage, the plague made its appearance in the ship; besides which, he suffered a dreadful hurricane, which he has well described in his Songs¹.

Having arrived safe in the port of Araglia he sailed for Sinope, and thence to Amissus; where, having disembarked, he passed by land to Mar-

¹ A collection of these Songs was published in the year 1771.

zevan, and arriving there in the year 1698, he remained the whole winter to preach; and on the approach of spring, went to Amasia. The people of these two cities begged him earnestly to remain with them; but having in view the universal benefit of his nation, at the end of the spring he left for Tocat, and with one of the Caravans entered into Erzerum.

Here he was grievously disappointed in learning the change which had taken place with regard to the Divine he sought, and his abandonment of his first excellent principles: wherefore, changing his determination, he applied with his disciples to the Bishop Macarius, Superior of the Convent of Passen, a man of approved virtue and of great literary attainments; hoping to gain his assistance in his undertaking. The Bishop received Mechitar with kindness, and seeing his excellent conduct and wisdom, confided to

him the education of the young students of his Convent. Besides these young men, he instructed the monks of the Convent and his disciples; assisting them in the study of Theology, and uniting to it the practice of morality and of religious exercises. Here he arranged those annotations, which for the purpose of preaching, he had already collected from the Holy Scriptures and from the Fathers.

One day, when he was arguing on some doctrinal points, an adversary opposed him with great zeal; but finding himself placed in so difficult a situation from the testimonies of the Armenian Fathers, advanced by Mechitar, he became enraged, and gave him a violent box on the ear. Mechitar supported the affront with so calm a patience, that his opponent was amazed, and suffered himself to be convinced of the truth of his arguments. At this time a contagious disorder made its ap-

pearance in the Convent, and some of the society fell victims to it. Mechitar providentially remained in health, and afforded to all his charitable assistance. Admiring the excellence of his example, and his profound wisdom, that society generally requested him to receive the honor of the title of Doctor, to benefit him in the preaching of the Gospel¹. The Superior, in particular, earnestly joined in the entreaty almost to forcing him. Unwilling to oppose their desire, he complied to make the trial in the year 1699. after which by order of the Superior, he went to preach, accompanied by one of his disciples, in the Diocese of the Bishop.

Mechitar happening to find himself one day alone with this Divine,

¹ Preaching is the office of a Doctor among the Armenians, because a Doctor can have greater advantages than a simple Priest.

revealed to him his wish to establish, by his assistance, a literary Society in the Armenian nation. But he immediately refused to unite himself with him, fearing tumult and the persecution of adversaries.

Mechitar despairing to have assistance from the Bishop, proposed to return to Constantinople; and to assemble followers in a house, for the purpose of instructing them in doctrines; and at the same time to publish pamphlets to beg the assistance of benefactors: and thus to forward, in some degree, his plan of enlightening the Armenian nation. For this purpose, he sent first to Constantinople one of his disciples: afterwards having with their parents' consent chosen two young men of the Convent, he came to Erzerum: and there stopped six months to preach, to the great advantage of the people. He passed thence to Trapezond where he embarked, and went

with his disciples to Constantinople in the year 1700.

**MECHITARISTICAN SOCIETY
AT CONSTANTINOPLE**

At first, Mechitar lodged in Galata, in a part of a house adjoining the Armenian Church of St. Gregory¹. Although he generally preached in this church, he administered the Sacraments also in the European Churches.

A violent contention having arisen at this time between the two Armenian parties, by his exhortation and prudence he succeeded in calming it. Seeing shortly afterwards that his followers increased in that capital, he called them together privately, and explained the plan of his Society. But

¹ Called Illuminator, because after the Apostles Bartholemew and Thaddeus, he converted the Armenian nation in the third Century.

that he might not be seen attended by so many he sent those of them, who were Priests and Doctors, to preach in the different cities of Armenia; and kept the young men united in the chambers of the Church above mentioned, and daily instructed them with great diligence.

This year Mechitar began to print some books, the first source and means of disseminating true knowledge in his nation. He published the "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas a Kempis, for the spiritual exercise of his followers, and afterwards other very useful books. But desirous of regularly training his followers in Christian virtue and in useful sciences, he was fervent in his prayers for the Divine assistance. He rented a house in Pera of Constantinople, and prepared the necessary tools for book binding, and retired there with his followers; and began to instruct them under the pretext of exercising

some manual labour. The state of the country, and of his nation, did not permit him to regulate his Society in any other form at that time. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these prudent precautions, he did not succeed in keeping his followers long united in this house. The violent persecutors of his nation assailed him, and his adversaries thought to take him, and to have him condemned to the Gallies. But he acquainted his companions of this, and secured himself under the protection of the French Ambassador.

Finding however that the persecution daily increased against him throughout the state, he wrote to those of his Society, who were at a distance from the capital, begging them to return to Constantinople as he wished to take them to some other part of the world; in order to retire from their persecutors, and to establish elsewhere a Society for the cultivation of know-

ledge, which from experience he saw was impossible in the East.

While Mechitar was retired in a Convent of Capucins, under the protection of the French Ambassador, he heard some Merchants speak of the fertility and good climate of the Morea, which at that time was subject to the Governor of the Republic of Venice. Influenced by these remarks he assembled his companions in his chamber, and explained to them afresh the object of the Society, and proposed choosing some other part of the world, more convenient for such purpose. After several consultations, they determined to subject themselves to the protection of one of the neighbouring Christian Governors; and preferred the Morea as the most convenient spot: both on account of its lying near at hand, and on account of the reasonable rate of provisions. This resolution they formed and at the same meeting elected Mechitar their Supe-

rior and dedicated themselves as adopted Sons of the Virgin, choosing as the badge of thier Society, the four Armenian letters Ռ Կ Վ Ա the initials of the following words ՌՐԿԵԴԻՐ ԿՈՒՍԻ ՎԱՐՂԱՍԿԻՆ ԱՍԿԱԶԻՍԱՐՈՒԹԵԱՆ, that is, *adopted son of the Virgin, Preacher of Repentance*. This first establishment of the Mechitaristican Society took place in Pera of Constantinople in the year 1701, in the month of September; and the members were, Doctor Mechitar of Sebaste, Doctor Elias of Constantinople, Doctor George of Antap, Doctor Emmanuel of Constantinople, Lazarus of Aghin, a young man of Sebaste, Azaria of Constantinople, Gabriel of Erzerum, and Michael of Sebaste.

Immediately they had formed this determination. Mechitar sent Doctor George to the Morea to examine the state of the country: he remained there three months, at the expiration of which he sent the necessary informa-

tion to Mechitar, who sent six persons in company with an Armenian Bishop to ordain his Priests. At the moment when Mechitar was on the point of starting with the remainder of his followers, his enemies endeavoured to arrest him, so that he was obliged to quit the Convent of the Capucins and to secrete himself in another house. Thence he sent some others of his companions to the Morea. After a few days in the disguise of a merchant he went to Smyrna with three of his followers. At his departure from Constantinople Mechitar had only in hand four hundred Piastres¹; and thus prepared, he went into a foreign country to establish his Society; a thing which in all human probability appeared impossible. On his arrival at Smyrna he found that an order was issued by the Governor for his arrest: on this account he conceal-

¹ A Piastre valued then 2 Shillings.

ed himself in a Convent of Jesuits . But having found a ship about to sail for Venice , he embarked to save himself with his companions in Zante, where he arrived in the year 1702 : having encountered another storm, which he has also described in his Songs . Being assured of the good climate and the fertility of the Island beyond his expectations, by letters he acquainted his followers of his arrival there, and requested of them further information regarding the Morea ; wishing to chose , of the two, the station most convenient for his establishment . They sent to him one of their companions to inform him personally of the state of the Island and to tell him that the Governors of the country with a view to encreasing the population of the Morea , were well disposed to give to his Society some lands whence to derive their support . In consequence of this information, Mechitar went without delay to Napoli di

Romania, in the year 1703. where, having found his companions to the number of sixteen in perfect safety and health, he returned signal thanks to the Almighty. Having rented a small house he established himself there with his little flock.

MECHITARISTICAN SOCIETY IN THE MOREA

Mechitar, being assured that he had an asylum for himself and his followers in the Morea, deliberated on founding a monastery and chose for that object the city of Modon, famed for its strength and numerous population.

Afterwards according to the letter of recommendation which they had from the Venetian Ambassador in Constantinople they presented a petition to the Governors: who without any scruple gave them a spot in Modon for the erection of a Convent and of a Church;

and moreover two villages from the returns of which they might provide for their subsistence ; on the terms, however, that they were to complete their building within three years . In consequence of this decree the Commander General of Modon was charged to provide a house in that city for the Society of Mechitar .

Mechitar being fixed in Modon made the best of his situation , and directed to the utmost of his power that which related to his undertaking . Previous, however , to commencing the building of his Convent , he sent two of his followers to Rome , to present to Pope Clement XI. the short Constitution of his Society , to which he gave the rule of St. Anthony Abbot in order that it might have the necessary approbation . But finding that the reply to his demand was delayed, he recalled one of those he had sent and desired the other to apply himself to the study

of the Latin and Italian languages, as most necessary to facilitate the instruction of his nation. He himself was already well informed in these languages as also in the Greek; and from them had translated some works into the Armenian tongue.

Already the term of three years allotted by the Governor were drawing to a close, and he on account of his poverty was unable even to commence the building of his monastery. He was therefore obliged to incur debts and to sell in advance the returns of the villages which had been given to him. In this manner he raised one part of his Convent of which he himself had formed the plan and wished to superintend the work in completing it, and to be able by the time specified to bring his companions assembled in the Morea to inhabit it. But to so great extremity of want was he brought that he could not even give to them their daily supplies,

wherefore he had recourse to Angelo Emo, Governor of the country, and besought assistance from him. The pious Governor provided for him a regular supply of bread and biscuit from the Government.

In this state of poverty did the Society of Mechitar live for nearly three years in which it was likewise attacked by fevers occasioned by the change of climate. None of the members however murmured against Mechitar, but all willingly endeavoured to forward diligently their peculiar duties and exercises of study. But after so long calamity it pleased the Providence of Heaven to favour the new Society.

The Governor Emo made to Mechitar the present of the sum of one hundred and fifty piastres, the Commander General of the Marine, Sebastian Mocenigo gave to him two hundred, and from the fruits of his lands he received six hundred.

With this assistance Mechitar began to build also his Church, for the erection of which the pious Emo gave the lime and stone at the expense of the Government. On the day on which he laid the foundation of the Church in the year 1708, the same Governor was present with great parade and pomp: and being surrounded by troops signaled the ceremony by the firing of cannon and the sound of military music. Having descended with Mechitar to the spot for the foundation, he assisted him in laying the first stone. When Mechitar, with his companions, was in the act of returning thanks to him he put into his hand forty sechins of Venice¹ to hasten the new building. As often as Emo went to Modon he did not fail to honor the Society so much esteemed by him by his presence, and by particular marks of his favor..

1 A Sechiu valued then 11 Shillings.

By his increased resources and by the liberality of Benefactors, Mechitar not only soon completed the building of his Church, but paid every debt to his Creditors: and bought two houses adjoining the Convent, and pulling them down, separated his Establishment from the habitations of the Seculars. This being done, he dedicated himself entirely to the regular instruction of his followers. For this end he chose the plan prescribed by the rules of St. Benedict, and presented this system of his Society to the Pope, who in approving it conferred on Mechitar the dignity of Abbot. Thus having assured the existence of his Society he recalled his follower from Rome, and with him translated into the Armenian tongue the Theology of Thomas d' Acquin for the use of the young students.

Whilst the undertaking of Mechitar of twelve years was prospering in the Morea, and daily his merits and the

advantage of the people encreased, the unfortunate war between the Turks and the Venetians broke out. The former having entered the kingdom in immense numbers and taken possession of the greater part, Mechitar was involved in the greatest misfortune and obliged to depart with his followers to Venice, the Capital of the Republic. But it was not allowed that all the Society should leave, and Mechitar with difficulty obtained permission to go with eleven of his followers. He hastily embarked with his chosen friends, and in tears left the Morea in the year 1715. This removal was still more distressing than that from Constantinople, as he often asserted. He however arrived safely in the Port of Venice in the month of April, and after the quarantine lodged himself and his Society in a hired house in the Parish of St. Martino.

MECHITARISTICAN SOCIETY
IN VENICE

But a short time had elapsed when Mechitar had spent the two hundred and twenty Piastres, which he had brought with him from Modon, in the maintenance of the Society, and had encumbered himself with a debt of one hundred and fifty Ducats. Notwithstanding, trusting in Providence, he waited with resignation the termination of the war in the Morea. After the lapse of four months, two of his followers, who had escaped from Modon, arrived after the attack of that city by the Turks, and informed him of the death of one of his Society, who had remained in the city. After some days he heard of the capture of Modon, and of the imprisonment of four of his followers. They were taken to Constanti-

nople by the Turks, afterwards to Adrianople, and ultimately sold to the Christians. Thus preserved they returned after some time to the arms of their Superior.

Having lost all hope of re-establishing himself in the Morea, he purposed with his followers to obtain a Convent in Venice, as he had the letters of recommendation and the testimonials of the Governor of the Morea, among which that of Luigi Mocenigo spoke thus: "There dwelt in the kingdom of the Morea, in a sumptuous Convent which with great expense they had raised, the Armenian Monks of the Order of S. Anthony Abbot, under the wise and zealous conduct of the Reverend Father Mechitar their Abbot. They shewed forth, one and all, so good an example in the devout offices of their church, by their example of morality, and by the purity of their living, that they edified much that peo-

ple and conciliated a universal respect, the public esteem , and the friendship of all the Representatives . During the whole time that I have had the charge of General Inspector of the Marine in the Levant, I have had opportunity to admire and commend their successful zeal in Divine worship , and from the terms of esteem with which the paternal kindness of Mons. Angelo Maria Carlini, Archbishop of Corinth regarded them and recommended them to me: as they are now obliged to take refuge under this government, owing to the unfortunate capture of the Morea; it seems to me an act of justice to give them the present document which may serve as a testimonial of their merits ” .

According to these letters, by the assistance of some Nobles whom he had known in the Morea , Mechitar presented a petition to the Senate to obtain a Convent in Venice. But at that

time it was not permitted to new Societies to establish themselves in the Capital, he therefore obtained the following proposal. „ If it please you to have without the city, on terra firma, a Convent for your perpetual property, and that of your Successors, we give you permission to take it where it may be convenient; but if you will have it in the city, we grant it you only for the space of your life on condition that it afterwards return to the Government . “ Mechitar could accept neither of these conditions, because living on terra firma, he could not have the means of supporting his companions ; and accepting a Convent in the Capital subject to his life he found useless for the attainment of the object of his Society. Deliberating for a length of time with his friends on this subject, in 1717. in the month of September, he received finally from the Senate for perpetual habitation , the small island

of St. Lazaro near to the city .

It had been originally given by Uberto, Benedictine Abbot to Lione Paolini; and he in the year 1180, had erected there an Hospital for Lepers, who at that time were numerous in the city; and dedicated the Church to the honor of S. Lione. The disease having entirely ceased the Presidents of the Hospitals destined the island for the asylum of the poor of the city. But soon finding from its distance from the city that they could not conveniently provide for their wants, they brought them back to the Hospital of the city. Hence it arose that each Hospital, both that on the island, and that in the city, was called St. Lazaro; probably from the parable in which Lazarus is introduced in the Gospel.

When Mechitar entered on this island, with the assistance only of a small annual contribution, he found no more than an old Church, some desert-

ed chambers , two wells, and a garden . Previously to fixing his Society there, as well as his poverty would permit, he divided the chambers into small apartments, and disposed them for the temporary dwelling of his Monks . And as soon as he saw them collected there, he went to Rome to defend his Society against calumnies spread by their enemies . This he did successfully and having received from the Pope, power to send Missionaries to the East, he returned to Venice .

In process of time, assisted by the Benefactors of his nation, he built his simple but neat Monastery of two stories, assigning a particular part for the dwelling of his Monks, of the Degree of Doctor , separate from that appropriated to the education of the youth, and from the School for more advanced students . He restored also the old Church, placed in it five altars, and laid the foundation of the new Belfry .

He built a large Refectory, and over it placed a fine Library of equal dimensions. He disposed also other parts with good taste and order, the result of his great genius, and of his indefatigable diligence and activity. When the Monastery was completed; numbers came to see it and admired its regularity. They suggested also that he should place his statue in a conspicuous spot, that there might be in the public view a monument to record his name to posterity. Humble; however as he was, he would not consent; and only to oblige his Benefactors he allowed, that over the door of the Refectory, there should be placed the following inscription in the two languages Armenian and Latin.

ՄԵՆԱՍՏԵՆՍ ՍԵՍ ՀՈՏ ԲՈՒՆԱՐԻՆ՝
 ՀԻՆԵՆԼ ԵՂԵՒ Ի ՓԵՐՍ ՓՐԿԶԻՆ,
 ՍԵՐՐԱՍԵՆՈՒԹԵՆՍ ՍԵՐԱՍՏԱՍԵՆՈՒՆ՝
 Մ ԻՒԹԱՐԸՆ ԿԱՐԴԵՂՆԵՆ .

FUIT HOC MONASTERIUM TOTUM TEMPORE
 MECHITAR PETRI EX SEBASTE I. ABBATIS
 EXTRACTUM AN. 1740.

After so many illustrious and truly noble deeds, after so much literary labour, and after having admirably fulfilled the office of Abbot, during forty nine years; he was attacked by the fatal disease of disintery, similar to that which he had suffered before in Cyprus, and on the 27. of April in the year 1749, at the age of seventy four years, he ended a meritorious life in a calm and resigned death leaving his followers in the greatest affliction, and universally regretted by his nation and by what foreigners were acquainted with him. He was buried in the Choir of his Church in a tomb prepared by himself, long before his death. But, one year afterwards, his followers wishing to shew particular honor to their patron,

removed his body to another more decent tomb in the Sanctuary of the Church, and over it engraved an appropriate epitaph .

His portrait is preserved by the Society in the room, in which are those of the Abbots, who have succeeded him .

Among the Disciples of Mechitar, during his life time, there were fifty Priests, ten of the Laity, and about forty other individuals, whom he did not think, after a long trial, fit to unite to his Society.

A P P E N D I X

Mechitar received into his Monastery, only Armenian youth; and making no distinction between rich or poor, his object was to choose the youngest. After having tried them some time, in order to discover their talents and disposition, he clothed them

in a black robe, according to the manner peculiar to his Society, and committed them to the Noviziato (School for the young); where they had fit Tutors to superintend their education the general direction being reserved to himself.

After a long trial, if they proved virtuously inclined, possessed of talents, and of strong health, subject to their own free choice he admitted them to his Society, provided he had the consent of the Members, which was decided by the plurality of votes. He then admitted them to the Professorio (School for the more advanced); in which they studied the more profound sciences under Tutors and Professors. When their course of study was completed, he promoted them to the Sacerdotal Order, and allowed them to live in the chambers assigned to the Doctors. He conferred on them afterwards the honor of Doctor; and some

he sent on Missions and others he kept in the Convent , to attend to literary pursuit. He did not receive any foreigner into his Society: because his object was the instruction of the Armenian nation , which foreigners could little advance. Those moreover of his Society whom he found deficient in abilities, he sent back to their country either immediately or after a short time.

To the youths who devoted themselves to study, he recommended principally with diligence to read the best authors, particularly of the Armenian nation. He taught them Grammar, History, Geography, Mathematics, Rhetoric, Poetry, Philosophy, and to Priests, Theology and Ethics. When they had finished the course of these studies, he examined them publicly, and to such as deserved them, he gave rewards.

To the study of the sciences, he united also that of languages; and par-

ticularly cultivated the exercise of the Armenian tongue; whence it comes, that this language flourishes in the greatest purity in the Island of St. Lazaro.

He had composed a summary of all the sciences, and given it to his Students. His greater aim was to exercise them in habits of Divine worship, wherefore, according to the custom of the Armenian nation, he assembled them to prayers three times a day, at morning, noon, and evening, and exempted only the children from morning prayer in the Church. Every Sunday he ordered the Mass to be chanted according to the Armenian ritual. The modesty and devotion of his Monks was such, as to afford edification to the foreigners, who took pleasure in assembling to see their functions. The principal care of Mechitar was to strengthen his pupils from a tender age, in the exercise of virtue; for which

object, he composed for them thirty three rules of which he required the most diligent observance. On Festivals, he instructed them more particularly in the Christian doctrine, and in the Sacred Scriptures. During the time of Dinner, he appointed the reading of the Bible, and of useful books; and permitted no conversation; as he caused to be written over the door in Armenian characters, "Here must be observed silence, and attention given to the reading of the Holy Scriptures".

He prescribed no particular abstinence, and besides the breakfast, he gave to his Monks during the day two or three plates, besides cheese and fruit.

He suffered no Monk to go to the city without having first obtained his permission.

When foreigners applied to see the Convent, he appointed some of his Monks to accompany them, who

always received them with politeness and attention .

Besides the continual exercise of his Students, Mechitar assigned also time for recreation. He ordered that seven hours of the day should be devoted to study, and as many to repose; in summer he allowed one hour in the day for sleep. After the dinner and the supper, there were two hours for conversation, and before the setting of the Sun, one hour was given to walking in the garden, in which he suffered the children to amuse themselves in games of bodily exercise. Once in the year he took them with him to the country residence on the Brenta, for the space of forty days: during which, they did not attend to study. In the last fifteen days of the Carnival, he exercised them in instructive representations: and suspended also their studies some days before Christmas. Besides these holidays and recreations he took them

some times to the public festivals in the city: and frequently to the seaside and to the adjacent islands .

The Doctors were sent by Mechitar on missions, particularly to Constantinople, to Natolia, to Armenia, to Georgia, to Persia, and also to the Indies: and particular advantages were acquired to those countries by their preaching and example .

He sent some of his disciples into Transilvania and into Hungery to take the offices of Pastors and to instruct the youth of the Armenian colonies. In the cities of Elizabethopoli and Peterwaradin in Transilvania are two small Convents and Churchs of his foundation. In the city of Venice, he ordained one of his followers as chaplain of the Armenian Church; and another of the Church of Lazzaretto situated on an island separate from the city; to which being urged by the Governor, he displayed the knowledge of his So-

ciety in the Oriental tongues; and the Society still continue to follow these offices.

Mechitar imported from Amsterdam three sorts of Armenian characters, at the same time; from the immediate use of which he was prevented by the care of building, the direction of the Monastery, and the tuition of his Students. He afterwards composed and published in his press different books. Among his literary labours, three are more particularly to be noticed; first, The Explanation of St. Matthew's Gospel, a large, learned, and interesting work: for the printing of which in the year 1737 he cast new Armenian characters. Second, The copious Vocabulary of the Armenian tongue, composed and printed by him in 1744. Third, The fine edition of the Armenian Bible adorned with figures, which he published in 1733: a copy of which, being sent to Pope Bene-

dict xiv. he received the following reply.

BENEDICT P. P. XIV.

“To our beloved Son, health and the Apostolical Benediction. Yesterday, we received by the hands of Monsignor, Secretary of the Propaganda, the worthy present, highly pleasing to us, of the Armenian Bible, and return for it our particular thanks. Equal are those also, which we return to him, and to all his Monks for the Missions which continue to produce so great fruit. Embracing all with paternal affection we give to him, and to all his good Monks the Apostolical Benediction”.

Nor are unworthy of notice and record, all the literary labours of the Society, who animated by the zeal of Mechitar erected a printing house in their Convent, in the year 1789;

and ever making progress in their studies, send to their nation many useful books, either composed by themselves, or translated from other languages into their own.

After the death of Mechitar, Doctor Stephen Melchiori, of Constantinople, filled the office of Abbot; to whom in the year 1800 succeeded Doctor Stephen Aconzio Kóvér, an Armenian noble, of Giorgiova in Transilvania, who was consecrated Archbishop in Rome in the year 1804. On his death, in 1824, he was succeeded by the worthy and Reverend Doctor Sukias Somal of Constantinople.

The beauty and exactness of the Armenian type is particularly to be remarked in the press of St. Lázaro. The books printed here are distributed throughout Asia; and from these not only does the Armenian nation derive edification, but the Society is also assisted in its support.

The Convent, after the death of the Founder, purchased some lands in the Venetian state, by the fruits of which, and by some Capital in the Venetian Bank, it is enabled to provide its maintenance and to educate gratuitously the Armenian Youth.

In the year 1810. when the other monastic Establishments were suppressed, the Mechitaristic Society, by virtue of a particular decree, remained in their former independence. To the peculiar neatness of the Convent and the Church of St. Lazaro, are added now the ornaments of the new Sacristy, and the new Cabinet of Armenian manuscripts, and of many instruments of experimental philosophy: both erected in the year 1816 by the liberality of Alexander Raphael Esq.

In the Church is to be remarked a copy of the Madonna, from the original of Sassoferato, in Rome.

In the antichapel will be observ-

ed affixed to the wall two fine monuments, one antient, the other modern: on the former without any date, is the following inscription in Gothic characters:

Hoc probus, et sapiens ortus de prole
(*Zuchola*

Clauditur in tumulo cui Constantinus
(*in urbe*

Nomen erat, Lazari Curator, amator,
(*et almi*

Compatiens inopum Domini sub honore
(*Superni.*

On the latter erected in 1816 by the same Alexander Raphael Esq. are seen the Arms of his family and his name in Armenian characters.

In the Refectory is a good painting of the last Supper by Pietro Novelli, Venetian. In the Library the

three paintings on the ceiling are by Francesco Zugno, Venetian.

The Society boasts of literary correspondence with the most remote countries. Latterly it has acquired a small property in Rome : and Mr. Samuel Moorat, a rich Armenian, has left in his will, a considerable sum of money; with which, under the care and superintendance of the Society, is to be established in Europe, a College for the education of Armenian poor and orphan youth. Which has been settled at Padua in the last year 1834.

Such then is the history of the Convent on the interesting island of St. Lazaro; inhabited by Armenians, whose object is the propagation of knowledge and literature in their own nation. The regulations of the Convent though they forbid the reception of foreigners into the Society, do not deny to them the benefit to be derived

from its learned Professors. Some English noblemen and gentlemen have taken advantage of this opportunity of studying the oriental languages; among whom the more distinguished are Lord St. Asaph, Lord William Russell, and the late Lord Byron: by whose assistance a Grammar of the Armenian and English languages was composed by the Rev. Doctor Aucher. This Rev. Gentleman has likewise compiled with John Brand Esq. of the University of Cambridge, a Dictionary of the Armenian and English languages.

To the literary exertions of the Society, the following works selected from those which have been published by their press, will afford ample testimony.

1750. *A course of Philosophy .
Catechism .*
1769. *Dictionary of the Armenian an-
tient and modern languages .*
1775. *Armenian Rhetoric .*
1779. *A new Grammar of the Arme-
nian language .*
1781. *Complete Arithmetic .*
1784. *Universal Armenian History .*
1786. *Thomas a Kempis .*
1787. *Maps .*
1792. *Tuscan Grammar in Armenian
and Turkish .*
1793. *Philosophy of Emmanuel The-
saurus .*
1794. *Geometry .*
1802. *Universal Geography .*
1804. *Vocabulary Italian Armenian
and Turkish .*
- Book keeping .*
1805. *Holy Bible, in the Armenian
Idiom .*
1809. *Navigation .*

1810. *Trigonometry.*
Spectacle of Nature.
Armenian Martyrology.
1812. *Vocabulary French and Armenian, Armenian and French.*
1813. *Treatise on the art of Painting.*
1815. *Second Grammar of the Armenian language.*
1816. *Rollin's Roman History.*
Grammar English and Armenian.
1817. *History of Robinson Crusoe.*
1818. *The Chronicles of Eusebius in Greek, Latin and Armenian.*
Fables of Esop.
1819. *Young's Night Thoughts.*
Grammar Armenian and English.
1821. *Vocabulary English and Armenian.*
Grammar French and Armenian.
1822. *Description of antient Armenia.*
Three Discourses of Philo Ju-

dæus, Greek, Latin and Armenian.

Medicine.

1823. *An Armenian Prayer in 24 languages.*
1824. *Milton's Paradise Lost.*
1825. *Dictionary Armenian and English.*
Rollin's Antient History.
Gessner's Death of Abel.
Commentaries of St. John Chrysostom.
- The Logic of Soave.*
1826. *Discourses of Eznic against the Manicheismus.*
1827. *Armenian history of Moses Chorenensis.*
Homilies of Severianus.
1828. *Armenian history of Elisha.*
Grammar Russiam and Armenian.
1829. *History of the Armenian Literature.*
1830. *The Poetries of St. Nerses*

Claiensis .

Hexameron of St. Basil .

Grammar German and Armenian .

The Characters of Theophrastus .
Tecnology .

1831. *Metastasio .*

1832. *Armenian History of Faustus*
Bysantius .

Medicine of Dr. Mechitar .

1833. *Works of St. Nerses Claiensis .*

1834. *Dictionary Armenian and Italian .*

The Antiquities of Armenia .

1835. *Plutarch's Lives .*

Armenian History of Agathangelus .

Dictionary Armenian Greek and Latin .

The Works of St. Ephraim .